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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Rural Utilities Service

Information Collection Activity; Comment Request

AGENCY: Rural Utilities Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice and request for comments.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. Chapter 35, as amended), the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development administers rural utilities programs through the Rural Utilities Service (RUS). The USDA Rural Development invites comments on the following information collections for which the Agency intends to request approval from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

DATES: Comments on this notice must be received by [INSERT DATE 60 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER].

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Michele Brooks, Director, Program Development and Regulatory Analysis, USDA Rural Development, 1400 Independence Ave., SW., STOP 1522, Room 5162, South Building, Washington, DC 20250-1522. Telephone: (202) 690-1078. FAX: (202) 720-8435.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) regulation (5 CFR 1320) implementing provisions of the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (Pub. L. 104-13) requires that interested members of the public and affected agencies have an opportunity to comment on information collection and recordkeeping activities [see 5 CFR 1320.8(d)]. This notice identifies information collections that RUS is submitting to OMB for extension.

Comments are invited on: (a) Whether this collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information will have practical utility; (b) the accuracy of the agency's estimate of the burden of the proposed collection of information including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used; (c) ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and (d) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on respondents, including through the use of appropriate automated, electronic, mechanical or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology. Comments may be sent to: Michele Brooks, Director, Program Development and Regulatory Analysis, USDA Rural Development, Stop 1522, 1400 Independence Ave., SW., Washington, DC 20250-1522. FAX: (202)720-8435.

Title: Operating Reports for Telecommunications and Broadband Borrowers.

OMB Control Number: 0572-0031.

Type of Request: Revision of an existing information collection package.

Abstract: Rural Utilities Service (RUS), an agency delivering the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development Utilities Programs, is a credit agency. RUS makes mortgage loans and loan guarantees to finance electric, broadband, telecommunications, and water and waste facilities in rural areas. In addition to providing loans and loan guarantees, one of the Agency's main objectives is to safeguard loan security until the loan is repaid.

This collection of information covers the Telecommunications Operating Report, the Broadband Operating Report, and RUS Form 674, "Certificate of Authority to Submit or Grant Access to Data." The data collected via the Telecommunications Operating Report is collected through the USDA Data Collection System. The data collected via the Broadband Operating Report is collected through the USDA Broadband Collection and Analysis System. The data collected via the Telecommunication and Broadband Operating reports is required by the loan

contract and provides Rural Development with vital financial information necessary to ensure the maintenance of the security for the Government's loans, and statistical data to enable the Agency to ensure the provision of quality telecommunications and broadband services as mandated by the Rural Electrification Act (RE Act) of 1936. The data collected via the operating reports provides financial information to ensure loan security consistent with due diligence. These functions are essential to protect loan security and to achieve objectives of the RE Act.

The data collected via RUS Form 674 provides information to the Agency to allow Rural Development Electric, Telecommunications, and Broadband program Borrowers to file electronic Operating Reports with the Agency using the USDA Data Collection System. RUS Form 674, accompanied by a Board Resolution, identifies the name and USDA eAuthentication ID for a certifier and security administrator who will have access to the USDA Data Collection System for purposes of filing electronic Operating Reports. The information collected on the RUS Form 674 is submitted in hard copy by Borrowers only when revisions are required or, in the case of a first time Borrower, when initially submitting the data.

Estimate of Burden: Public reporting for this collection of information is estimated to average 3.45 hours per response.

Respondents: Businesses or other For-profit and Not-for-profit Institutions.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 676.

Estimated Number of Responses per Respondent: 1.36.

Estimated Total Annual Burden on Respondents: 2,806.

Title: Distance Learning and Telemedicine Loan and Grant Program.

OMB Control Number: 0572–0096.

Type of Request: Revision of a currently approved information collection package.

Abstract: The Rural Utilities Service's (RUS) Distance Learning and Telemedicine (DLT) Loan and Grant program provides loans and grants for advanced telecommunications services to improve rural areas' access to educational and medical services. The various forms and narrative statements required are collected from the applicants (rural community facilities, such as schools, libraries, hospitals, and medical facilities, for example). The purpose of collecting the information is to determine such factors as eligibility of the applicant; the specific nature of the proposed project; the purposes for which loan and grant funds will be used; project financial and technical feasibility; and, compliance with applicable laws and regulations. In addition, for grants funded pursuant to the competitive evaluation process, information collected facilitates RUS' selection of those applications most consistent with DLT goals and objectives in accordance with the authorizing legislation and implementing regulation.

Estimate of Burden: Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 2.45 hours per response.

Respondents: Business or other forprofit; Not-for-profit institutions; and State, Local or Tribal Government.

Estimated Number of Respondents: 210.

Estimated Number of Responses per Respondent: 23.33.

Estimated Total Annual Burden on Respondents: 12,788 hours.

Dated: April 26, 2012

Jonathan Adelstein
Administrator
Rural Utilities Service

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